

FIG. 1, the body 10 also has all of the elements typical of the body of a doll, including two arm 12, and two hands 13.

[0032] The body 10 of the invention can be made from a variety of different materials. The invention is intended for use by children on a bathroom countertop and therefore needs to be durable and constructed from fully or relatively waterproof materials. In the preferred embodiment, the body 10 is made from hard plastic. In alternate embodiments, the body 10 could be made of soft or hard rubber or soft plastics.

[0033] FIG. 2 shows the back 15 of the body 10, along with a schematic representation of the sound generator 40, speaker 42, battery housing 44, activation mechanism 46, and connecting wire 48. The sound generator 40, speaker 42, and battery housing 44 are housed in the interior cavity 30 of the body 10. The sound generator 40 is of the type well known in the art, and can include digital or analog tape recorders, computer chip, or other suitable sound producing devices. Sound is produced by means of the speaker 42, and electrical power is provided to the sound generator 40 by means of batteries (not shown) contained in the battery housing 44. The power is turned on and off by means of the activation mechanism 46. In various embodiments, the activation mechanism 46 can be as simple as an ON/OFF switch on the back of the body 10. In the embodiment depicted in FIG. 1, the activation mechanism is a pressure sensitive ON/OFF switch located in the hand 13 of the body 10, and electronically connected to the battery housing 44 by means of a connecting wire 48. In this embodiment, the sound generator 46 is turned on by squeezing the hand 13 of the invention.

[0034] In alternate embodiments, the activation mechanism 46 can be integrated into the configuration of the body 10. For example, in one potential embodiment, the body 10 will be a robot with his hand 13 extended, and the device will be turned on by shaking the hand 13. Other embodiments may include a puppy or a kitty, with the activation mechanism 46 located in the belly, so that power to the device is turned on by rubbing, tickling or patting the belly. In yet another embodiment, the activation mechanism 46 can be a light sensor of the type well known in the art. In this embodiment, the activation mechanism 46 can be mounted in the head or eye (not shown) of the device, and activated by moving the hand near the activation mechanism 46.

[0035] FIG. 3 shows the access panel 20 in the back 15 of the body 10. The access panel 20 provides access into the interior cavity 30 of the body, and access to the battery housing 44. In FIG. 3, the access panel 20 is shown secured by a screw 22. In alternate embodiments, the access panel 20 can be secured by any suitable means.

[0036] The sound generator 40 will contain a number or prerecorded messages that will be played when the device is activated by means of the activation mechanism 46. In use, a child will turn on the invention with the activation mechanism 46. The sound generator 40 will provide a dental hygiene message by means of the speaker 42.

[0037] The sound generator 40 will provide a variety of dental hygiene messages regarding brushing, flossing, and use of mouthwash, among other topics. Information on brushing will include, but is not limited to such advice as "be sure to get the back teeth" or "brush up and down on the side teeth." There will also be prerecorded messages of encour-

agement, such as "keep brushing" or "just one more minute." There will also be encouraging music, such as nursery rhymes. The sound generator 40 will also contain a randomizer to randomly play different messages and music so that the child will not tire of the same messages and songs every night.

[0038] Pediatric dentists recommend that children brush their teeth for at least two minutes. To help children achieve this goal, the sound generator 40 will also contain an integrated timer (not depicted). The timer will be electronically integrated into the sound generator 40 in a manner well known in the art, and will be coordinated with the dental hygiene message that is being played. So, for example, at the very beginning, the message will say "remember to brush for two minutes" or words to that effect, and then later it will give time references, such as "you've brushed for one minute, way to go!" or "only thirty more seconds, keep brushing." In this way the message from the invention will encourage the child to brush for the recommended two minutes.

[0039] FIG. 4 depicts an embodiment of the dental hygiene tutorial toy with an integrated toothbrush and drinking cup holder. In this embodiment the body 10 is mounted on the base 50. In the representative configuration depicted in FIG. 4, the body 10 is of a bear, and the base 50 is a log, which is frequently associated with bears, because bears are known to scratch themselves against them, and search them for honey. In other configurations of the body 10 and the base 50 will similarly correspond, so for example if the body 10 is a baby doll, the base 50 would be a crib. In another example, if the body 10 is configured as a superhero such as Batman®, the base 50 could be the Batmobile®.

[0040] In the embodiment depicted in FIG. 4, the base serves as a toothbrush and drinking cup holder. It is also within the conception of the invention that the base could also serve as a toothpaste holder. The base 50 contains a slot 52 integrated therein. The slot 52 is sized to receive a toothbrush 53. The base 50 also contains a recess 54 integrated therein. The recess 54 is sized to receive a drinking cup 55. It is within the conception of the invention to incorporate the toothbrush, drinking cup, and toothpaste directly into the body 10. In this alternate embodiment of the invention the body 10 would include one hand 13 holding a toothbrush 53, and the other hand 13 holding the drinking cup 55.

[0041] The incorporation of the toothbrush 53 and drinking cup 55 into either the body 10 or the base 50 serves two purposes. First it provides ready storage for these dental hygiene products. But more importantly it enhances the visual appeal to children, and will allow children to approach brushing as playtime, and not as a chore.

[0042] The present invention is well adapted to carry out the objectives and attain both the ends and the advantages mentioned, as well as other benefits inherent therein. While the present invention has been depicted, described, and is defined by reference to particular embodiments of the invention, such reference does not imply a limitation to the invention, and no such limitation is to be inferred. The depicted and described embodiments of the invention are exemplary only, and are not exhaustive of the scope of the invention. Consequently, the present invention is intended to be limited only by the spirit and scope of the claims, giving full cognizance to equivalents in all respects.